

SUMMER 2013
Newsletter No.35

Newham & District Landcare Group



Working towards a
healthier environment

Melbourne Water
Victoria
The Place to Be

Production of this newsletter is funded through
Melbourne Water's Community Grants Scheme

Address – PO Box 314, WOODEND, 3442



Powerful Owl chicks

DIARY OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 19th. Weeds for Food. Presented by Doris Pozzi.
9.30am – 12.30pm

Newham is brimming with an abundance of wild edibles and so are its gardens. Many of Newham's weeds are edible – not just edible but nutritious, tasty and free!

Learn where to find these foods, how to identify them and how to prepare them in the kitchen.

- Are you are a keen gardener curious to learn more about the plants around you?
- Do you want to incorporate more fresh, nutritious, tasty local food into your and your family's diet?
- Do you want to cut your food bills?
- Just simply interested in plants?

RSVP: Fran Spain 5427 0661.

MARCH

Sunday 3rd. Clean Up Australia Day.
9:00am to 12 noon, meet at Wesley Park.

APRIL

6th or 13th (TBA) at the Newham Hall –

Landcare will be facilitating a talk by the CFA Vegetation Management Officer who will present a talk built around choosing plants that have a fire retardant property in bushfire prone areas.

Part of the talk will be about fire behaviour in vegetation that is not fire retardant and will cover appropriate vegetation in wild life corridors.

Group contacts

President: Penny Roberts. **Vice President:** Helen Scott. **Treasurer:** Hilary Roberts.

Committee members: Howard Stirling, Karl Kny and Nick Massie.

Secretary: Fran Spain.

New members, general queries: Penny Roberts; 5427 0795.

Roadsides: Sue Massie; 5427 0065.

Newham Primary: Jenny Waugh; 5427 0408.

Animal pests: John Luckock; 5427 0909.

Wesley Park: Fran Spain; 5427 0661.

Flora, library, small tools, grants: Penny Roberts; 5427 0795.

Spray trailer: Chris Wigggett; 5423 5279.

The committee meets on the first Monday of the month (February to December) between 7.30 – 9pm in Newham. All members are welcome to attend the Committee meetings to become more involved or raise specific matters. Please advise a committee member if you wish to attend. Meetings start and finish on time... and we enjoy them!

The Weedies – NDLCG Roadside Management Group

Our history and achievements

Following a meeting of the Newham and District Landcare Group on 16 March 2005, a sub group was initiated by Alice Aird to deal with the problem of roadside management. Several members registered their interest in being a part of this project.

The first Roadside Group meeting was held at the Newham General Store on 11 May 2005. Nine members attended and formed their ideas for roadside improvement. Weed management was seen as the first priority within the long term objective of improving the roadsides as habitat for local flora and fauna. Taken into account were the varied factors which affect roadsides, such as fire and provision of services. Members of the Group drew up a list of tasks/ideas to be undertaken as part of the Roadside Project and held a Strategy meeting in July 2005.

Discussions were undertaken with Lachlan Milne, Environment Resources Officer, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, about the way the weed project could be commenced. He suggested we nominate which roads the group considered a priority for weed destruction. Three roads were initially nominated: Dons Road, Egans Lane and Jim Road. The Council undertook spraying of weeds along these roadsides in 2006.

The Group also undertook to map the level of weed infestation of roads within the district and to enter this information in the Council database. Mapping commenced on 10 January 2006, when Lachlan instructed members of the team on the method of recording the information on mapping sheets. One member drives their vehicle, others judge types and percentages of weeds per hundred metres and record this on the mapping sheets.

Mapping adventure

Members have subsequently entered data (with some computer terror!) on the Council's database for the following roads which have been mapped: Jim Rd, Don's Rd, Egans Lane, Colwell's Rd, Doherty's Rd, Wiseman's Lane, Forest Rd, Crozier's Rd, Boundary Rd, Whitebridge Rd, Bryce's Lane, Bolger's Lane, Garth Rd, Shelton's Rd, Henneberg's Lane/Saunders Rd. Council has agreed to weed control on roads that were identified as badly infested.



In all, the group has spent 78 hours mapping, 40+ hours data entry, and with the help of extra Landcare volunteers and working bees, over 115 hours cutting and painting and/or removing Broom, Gorse and Blackberry on roadsides. That's over 6 weeks labour contributed to GDP.

Another activity was to write a letter to landowners about the weed spraying of their roads and suggested management of weeds on their property; this was distributed by the Council for us in 2007. We have also researched roadside management plans for other shires and liaised with MRSC to finalise its draft plan.

Activities we have organised include:

- *Bandages for a wounded Landscape*, talk by Dr Stevan Krstic, 31 August 2007.
- Indigenous seed propagation workshop run by Marie Marmara, 11 October 2008.
- Display and list of weeds and plants, Lancefield Show, 19 October 2008.

- Sustainability Expo stand in Woodend with examples of local weeds, 6 February 2010.
- *It looks lovely, pity it's a weed*, talk by Department of Primary Industry, 8 October 2010.
- Cut and Paint weed sessions throughout the years.
- Clean Up Australia Days (2006–2011), collecting rubbish on Rochford, Coach, Don's, Jim and Three Chain roads.
- Don't miss the forthcoming *Weeds for Food* event with Doris Pozzi on 19 February 2013 at Newham Hall. Learn where to find wild edible foods, how to identify them and how to prepare them in the kitchen.

Our future plans include:

1. Continuing to survey and map weeds on new roads and to document roads worked on by council.
2. Developing principles and guidelines for improving roadside vegetation and habitat in preparation for identification of priority areas.
3. In consultation with MRSC, identifying and listing indigenous plants on roadsides for information and education purposes; research plants to replace weeds and plan replanting with consideration to fire precautions etc. We are currently corresponding with the Conservation Planner about Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) lists used to assist regeneration of roadsides.
4. Propagating indigenous plants for revegetation of roadsides in liaison with the Propagation Group.

Current members are Sue Massie – our indefatigable convenor, organiser and record-keeper, Karl Kny, Helen Scott, Fran Spain, Horst and Juliana Tellbach, and Chris Wiggett.

We meet at 7pm bi-monthly at various members' homes. Newcomers will be made very welcome. All enquiries to Sue Massie – 5427 0065.



Attack on Paterson's Curse, Palmer Crescent.

The Weedies lament

How many roads must a weedie walk down
Before the weeds have all gone?
And how many sprays must be done in a day
Before the gorse is no more?
And how much tea must be drunk in the breaks
Before the work starts again?
The answer my friend, is growing on the verge
The answer is growing on the verge.

How much mapping must be done in a year
Before we know what we face?
Yes, and how many types of weed will be known
Before all plans are in place?
How many trips down the road must be made
Before keying-in is complete?
The answer my friend, is growing on the verge
The answer is growing on the verge.

Words by Neil McMaster, sung to the tune of *Blowin' in the Wind*,
written by Bob Dylan in 1962.

Hardwood stakes

2nd hand but suitable for re-use. 10c each. These are loose – probably about 500
These have come off a project site – income derived will go into general Landcare funds.
Contact Penny, at penroberts@bigpond.com

Cheap plant options for 2013 and beyond

Landcare has not placed an order with Treeproject for this year.

Some indigenous natives will still be available to Landcare members at 50c per tube

- grown by the propagating group that meets on Thursday mornings
but surplus to requirements of MWSF orders.
- all grown from seed collected locally

Periodically there will be seedlings surplus to the needs of the propagating group – these will be available for you to 'prick out' into recycled forestry tubes. Tubes and mix provided, along with instruction by me on how to do it.

A charge will be made towards the cost of potting mix and fertilizer used [\$10 per box of 50 tubes]. These will be ready for planting in 2013.

AVAILABLE NOW: Candlebark, *Eucalyptus rubida*; Manna Gum, *Eucalyptus viminalis*;
Swamp Gum, *Eucalyptus ovata*; Drooping She-oak, *Allocasuarina verticillata*.

Contact Penny, at penroberts@bigpond.com

Book Review

ESSENTIAL BUSHFIRE SAFETY TIPS Third Edition

JOAN WEBSTER OAM

CSIRO PUBLICATIONS. RRP \$29.95

A timely BOOK REVIEW from Aesop's Attic Bookshop, Kyneton



“Contains over 2000 authenticated tips covering every known bushfire danger and safety factor.”

This is a well respected text on the topic of bushfire safety now in it's third edition.

Joan Webster was awarded an Order of Australia in this years Australia Day Honours List for her many years of work in the field of Bushfire safety.

Each chapter of this book covers a different aspect of bushfire safety:

Understanding bushfire; Killer factors; Survival factors; How bushfire destroy houses; Home as haven; Protective home site; Protective property, layout; Protective garden; Protective house design; Protective furnishing; Refuge room; Protective equipment; Water for protection; Planning ahead; Protective chores; Safe burn off; Protecting domestic animals; Protective travelling; Evacuate or stay; What to do when bushfire threatens; Bibliography (which is extremely detailed).

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~newhamlc/>

Have you had a look at the Newham Landcare website recently? Helen Scott has taken on the task of updating the excellent job started in 2007 by Matthew Nixon and is attempting to master HTML code.

Keep up to date with the diary of Events page, the Newsletters, and Activities reports from the AGM; explore further afield from the updated Links page; see Photos of some of our activities. All the familiar pages remain and are being progressively updated.

Feel free to send Helen any suggestions at hscott@arkitura.com.

Free Sustainable Land Management poster available now (see opposite page) – displayed on the Landcare board outside the Newham store.

Available from Penny (5427 0795), at the Store or from Western Plains Flora.

Powerful Owl – *Ninox strenua*

The Newham Walking Group were lucky to be able to spot (with Ranger Guido's help) two Powerful Owl chicks a couple of weeks ago. Sue Massie took this picture of the chicks.

What does it look like?

The Powerful Owl is a large owl with a relatively small head and a rounded tail. It is dark grey to dark grey-brown above, with white barring, and off-white below, with distinctive dark v-shaped chevrons. The eyes are yellow, set in a dark grey/brown facial mask. The legs are feathered and the yellow to orange feet are massive, with sharp talons. The sexes are alike but the female is smaller, with a narrower head. Juvenile birds are downy white on the head and underparts, the underparts are sparsely streaked, and they have much shorter tails than the adults. Powerful Owls are the largest of the Australian nocturnal birds (night birds).



Similar species:

Where the range of the Powerful Owl overlaps with the similarly shaped Rufous Owl, *N. rufa*, it can be distinguished by its chevrons on the underparts, and general lack of rufous colouring. Juveniles can be similar, but those of the Rufous Owl are never streaked.

Where does it live?

The Powerful Owl is endemic to eastern and south-eastern Australia, mainly on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range, from south-eastern Queensland to Victoria. It is found in open forests and woodlands, as well as along sheltered gullies in wet forests with dense understoreys, especially along watercourses. Will sometimes be found in open areas near forests such as farmland, parks and suburban areas, as well as in remnant bushland patches. Needs old growth trees to nest.

Seasonal movements:

Sedentary.

What does it do?

The Powerful Owl is a carnivore, eating mainly medium to large tree-dwelling mammals, particularly the Common Ringtail Possum, *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*, and the Great Glider. It will also take roosting birds and sometimes small ground-dwelling mammals such as rabbits or small marsupials. It forages mainly in trees, swooping down on prey and taking prey with its feet.

The Powerful Owl mates for life (over 30 years in some cases) and pairs defend an all-purpose territory year-round. The male prepares the nest, which is usually a vertical hollow in a large old tree, and provides the female and young with a constant supply of food during the early part of the nesting period. The female incubates the eggs and broods the young, emerging later in the nesting period to hunt for food as well. Young birds remain with the parents for several months after fledging and may stay within their parents' territory for over a year.

Living with us

The Powerful Owl is adversely affected by land clearing, but can live in fragmented habitats such as farms or suburban areas. Sometimes killed by cars. Young birds are sometimes killed by foxes, cats or dogs.

(from *Birds in the Backyard* Website)

Native Grasses

In late November, Karl Kny represented Newham Landcare at the two day Native Grass Identification Short Course in Bendigo. It was organised by the North Central CMA region and the Trainer, Paul Foreman from Blue Devil Consulting, did a great job introducing the group to grass biology, identification and management. The first day was spent in the classroom followed by a field day which covered field identification and grassland management. It is amazing how interesting grasses are and Karl was so impressed that he asked Paul to complete an assessment of his property on Sheltons Road.

Paul spent 3 days on the property and set up fourteen monitoring sites (including one on the Sheltons Road verge). He has prepared a map of vegetation classes and very detailed flora listings for each site for current and future monitoring. He is also developing some recommended trial management techniques to enhance the native grassland and flora on the property.

Paul would be very pleased to present to the Landcare group and we are planning a field tour and presentation by him this coming year.



Paul Foreman pressing grass samples during the field day.



Our Christmas BBQ provided the usual culinary flair, augmented with exceptional sporting skills 'on the field'.

This year's winners were – Egg Toss Champions – Janine Stirling and Karl Kny.

Gumboot Champion – Paul Tanner.

